
Traffic Matters 11-04-01

Many people who drive cars like to increase their performance or have them look better than the average car. This has been popular since the invention of the automobile. People want their car to look good or have themselves look good while driving their car. The people we see driving on the roads of Milpitas are no exception. How many times has your attention been drawn to a certain vehicle that has a loud exhaust? Maybe you will see chrome rims on a car that has also been lowered. Tinted windows or other type of window shades are also popular. The police often see the "racer" type cars with modified air/fuel induction. I ran into a group of young people modifying the stock suspension of a car in the parking lot of one of our city's parks. This was definitely not the place to be working on their car.

"Let the buyer beware." Many after market products for cars are not legal for our public roadways. The people that sell these products are under no obligation to advise you if the item sold is street legal. The following are some popular items or modifications that may apply to your vehicle.

Any tinting to the car's windows is only allowed to the windows to the rear of the front seat. Some people think that a certain percentage of tinting is allowed to the front seat windows. This would be wrong. Police do not need a special tool to check the tinting. We simply compare it to other car's windows on the road. No type of window shade is legal to these same windows.

Any modification to the air/fuel intake will result in a citation that can only be signed off by a Department of Motor Vehicles referee. No vehicle can be lowered past the lowest point of the car's rim. All lights on the car must comply with the vehicle code as to it's color, height and location. The car's exhaust can not be modified to make it louder. The car's tires must be in good condition with the proper amount of tread. Some people overload the back of their truck and the weight exceeds the tire's limit. Major dollar modifications to the car may mean that you owe additional registration fees.

It's important to remember that not all the accessories that are available for your car comply with our state's vehicle code. This was done to ensure the safety of everyone who uses the public roadways. If you have a question about a modification or change, contact the police or DMV.

Traffic Matters 10-14-01

Halloween will be here soon and I think this is a good time to start planning for safety during this event. I have seen Halloween stores selling costumes in various sizes and colors. Everyone knows that this event will place a lot of costumed pedestrians on our roadways. Trick or Treating can be safe fun for all participants especially if some pre-planning precautions are considered. The mixture of extra pedestrians, dark lighting conditions, costumes, and vehicles on the road make this an event that needs extra consideration. Here are a few ideas that will help everyone have a safe Halloween evening.

Parents should think carefully when selecting a costume for their child. Think about choosing clothing that makes children more visible at night. Consider using glow sticks, reflective tape or flashlights to help illuminate your child while on the sidewalks or while in the roadway. Avoid crossing in the middle of the street. Try and cross the street by using an available crosswalk or at the corner of an intersection. Use some extra time before stepping into the street so that vehicles have a better opportunity can see you.

Another big issue to consider when choosing a costume is fire safety. Make sure that the costume you purchase has a manufactures tag attached. The costume must conform to fire safety regulations. Make sure to avoid open flame in or near pumpkins. Some people may use candles or hot lights to create a Halloween scene at their home. Check your child's costume carefully to make sure that it will not restrict breathing or cause choking.

I strongly recommend that a parent or adult accompany smaller children while trick or treating. Remember to report any suspicious circumstances to the police department. Have a safe and fun Halloween.

Traffic Matters 09-26-01

It has been difficult coming back to work and trying to return to some sort of routine after watching the World Trade Center, Pentagon and Pennsylvania terrorist attacks. Although there has been plenty of work to complete, the image of the plane crashing into the second tower always lingers in the back of my head. I am saddened by the loss of lives due to this terrible act of violence. I know that the police officers and fire fighters had only one thought on their minds as they responded to the scene, to save people. I am very proud of their dedication in the face of life threatening odds. God bless America and all those who serve public safety.

Here in the city of Milpitas, I am concerned about the safety of children in or near our public roadways. Our traffic division has investigated two collisions involving pre-kindergarten aged children and automobiles. One child was running down her family's driveway towards the street in front of her home. Her father was following her attempting to catch her. She was able to run into the road where she hit the side of a moving truck. She suffered moderate injuries to both of her feet.

The second collision involved a child who was riding a toy scooter while accompanied by his father. The child turned unexpectedly into the road and was struck by a moving vehicle. The child suffered major injuries to the head. Fortunately, some of that injury was reduced because the child was wearing a helmet. The hospital treating the child's injuries reported that they were not life threatening.

It is so important to remind parents and guardians to watch children carefully when they play near a public roadway. All children are required to wear a bicycle helmet when riding a bicycle. I would strongly recommend that a helmet be used when a child is riding any toy, scooter or skateboard. Children can not realize the danger of the cars on the road until they are taught and constantly reminded.

Traffic Matters 09-2-01

It's that time of year where our kids are back in school. It will take some time for our parents to reacquaint themselves with getting their kids to and from school. Traffic is really heavy in front of most of our schools and everyone needs to take extra care and patience in negotiating the congestion. I thought this week would be a good time to answer some frequently asked questions regarding traffic matters nears our schools.

Q. Where is a good spot to drop off our kids at Milpitas High School?

A. There are three really good spots to unload your kids. A very high percentage of parents try and use a 200' area directly in front of the school. This causes a lot of congestion. There is a large area in the north parking lot of the high school that is not often used and it is big enough to accommodate a lot of cars. Arizona Avenue on the West Side of the high school is also not used enough. The use of these two additional areas would greatly reduce the amount of traffic on Escuela Parkway.

Q. Can my child take off their seatbelt while I'm driving in the parking lot of the school?

A. I would not recommend your child taking off their seatbelt while the car is moving in the parking lot. Collisions can occur in the parking lot and the safety of your child should come first. Also, the vehicle code does apply to the roadways of public schools and you could be cited.

Q. If traffic is backed up so that no cars are moving, can I unload my kids in the middle of the road?

A. Putting a pedestrian out in the middle of a busy street is not a good idea. Any pedestrian outside of a crosswalk must yield to cars on the roadway. The driver letting the pedestrian out of the car in the middle of the road impedes traffic and the pedestrian is violating the right of way of other vehicles on the roadway.

Q. My child is four years old, but only weighs thirty-two pounds. Does she still need a car seat?

A. Your child must be four years old and weigh forty pounds. Make sure your child is secure in the car seat and that the seat is fastened properly. We do stand in front of the schools to make sure that drivers are in compliance with this law.

Q. How long can I park in a loading zone?

A. Most of the loading zones are posted at three minutes. Do not stay longer than the allotted time or leave your vehicle unattended. You could come back to your car and find a parking citation.

You will see a lot of traffic officers over the next two weeks in the areas of our schools to make sure people are following the rules of the road. If you have any questions, feel free to call or e-mail.

Traffic Matters 08-12-01

A child in a car can be a dangerous situation, even when it's not moving. One family experienced the death of their child when the father left their baby unattended inside a car on

a hot summer day. Some people don't realize how hot the interior of a car can get on a warm or hot day. I think that everyone has experienced not being able to sit on their vinyl seats or touch the steering wheel after returning to their parked car on a hot day. The interior of the car heats past the exterior temperature because first, there is no air circulation with the windows closed. I believe most people close their windows for security. Second, the glass windows of the car also affect the heating of the interior air supply and surfaces. I'm sure that different cars vary, but I think it is reasonable to calculate that if the exterior temperature is eighty degrees, the interior can exceed one hundred degrees. I have seen this difference on the thermometer inside my own vehicle.

Children are more susceptible to body core temperature changes due to their smaller body mass. An over heated child will first experience heat exhaustion. This is where the body becomes dehydrated and the body loses an important tool for cooling. If left untreated, this will lead to heat stroke. Taber's Medical Dictionary defines heat stroke as; "an acute and dangerous reaction to heat exposure characterized by high body temperature, usually over one hundred and five degrees." The child's brain begins to suffer damage that can lead to death. If an adult gets too hot inside a car, they easily exercise their free will to get out and find someplace cooler. Children will not make this kind of decision on their own, especially if they are obeying their parent's direction to stay in the car. Many children are too young to leave the car unassisted even if it were an emergency.

Leaving a child unattended inside a vehicle on a hot day is too risky. The combination of too much heat, lack of shade and no water puts them in a dangerous situation. Every driver should exercise caution and care of any children that are in their vehicle. If anyone sees a child unattended inside of a car and it appears to be an unsafe situation, call 911 immediately. The police will respond to make sure that that child is safe. Children should always be safe in our care, not because negligence will result in prosecution, but it is the right thing to do.

Traffic Matters 07-27-01

I spend a lot of time in traffic court. This is an important portion of my job that results from writing a lot of citations. People have the right to contest their citations. This court process gives a defendant the opportunity to confront witnesses, present evidence and testify on their own behalf. Everyone has a story. The traffic court commissioners make rulings based upon the witness's articulation, recollection and communication of the evidence presented to the court. While I'm waiting for the court to open, I take the time to talk to other cops, court clerks and a multitude of people who have questions about their citation. I also like to talk to the court commissioners see if they have any feedback that would help the public understand the court process.

I was talking to traffic court commissioner Deborah Ryan the other day and she brought up the topic of stop sign violations. She hears defendants testify time and again on how they are absolutely sure they stopped for the stop sign. She would like to see people take some time and stand at an intersection to watch how other motorists stop at stop signs. Most people slow to a crawl but they do not come to a complete stop. This is especially prevalent when the motorist is making a right turn at a stop sign. Motorcycle cops like me put ourselves in a position that allows us to monitor the car's progress as it approaches the limit line. The wheels of the car must stop turning before or at the limit line. Any turn from this type of intersection requires a full and complete stop. Motorists also need to yield to traffic already in the intersection or close enough to be a hazard.

Stop sign violations have the potential of being especially hazardous just as much as running a red light. Many stop signs are in residential areas and have marked crosswalks for pedestrians. Stop does mean a cessation of movement. I think that everyone could benefit from spending a few minutes at a stop sign to remind us on how to safely negotiate this traffic matter.

Traffic Matters 07-08-01

Good weather and the high price of gas have brought a lot of motorcycles out onto our roadways. I saw a great deal of Harley Davidson motorcycles heading to the city of Hollister for a Fourth of July Motorcycle rally this last weekend. Mixed in with those motorcycles were a few sport type motorcycles. What's the difference between the two? Harley Davidson is well known as a cruiser type of motorcycle. Although four big manufacturers such as Yamaha, Suzuki, Kawasaki, and Honda do make a few cruiser models, they are better known for their sport type of motorcycles. Many Harley Davidson owners spend thousands of dollars in custom additions to their motorcycles that drive up their value of their motorcycles. Custom built cycles can exceed forty thousand dollars. Many sport motorcycles are based from high performance race cycles. They are very fast and handle very well for less than thirteen thousand dollars. Despite their differences in the type of motorcycle they want to ride, all motorcyclists have to deal with a certain amount of risk whenever they take to our roadways.

There are a few problems we all experience when we see a mix of cars and motorcycles on our roadways. People who drive cars complain about people who drive motorcycles and vice versa. One of the biggest complaints about motorcyclists is the manner in which they split traffic lanes during heavy traffic. This is not illegal unless the speed or movement of the motorcycle causes another vehicle to engage in emergency maneuver to avoid a collision. Motorcyclists complain that people driving cars don't pay close enough attention to motorcycles sharing the roadway. Just today while driving to work I saw this man in a Cadillac driving too slow and swerving in the #1 lane of I-680. Two other cars and I had to change lanes to go around this guy. Just as I pull along side of the driver, I peered into his car and found him with a day planner on the bottom rung of the steering wheel. He was using both hands to go through the book and I could only guess that he was using his knees to steer the car. His guy is a collision just waiting to happen. He epitomizes the lack of concern and safety that makes many motorcyclists shake their head in disbelief.

Motorcycle collisions are a topic of great concern in this part of California. I read many questions and comments from concerned motorists about motorcycle problems in my local newspaper. I also read that a motorcyclist lost his life this last weekend after colliding with a van whose driver had a medical emergency and hit a cement divider. Exercising care and courtesy can solve many of these problems by both types of drivers. Car drivers need to look for motorcycles when changing lanes, making left turns or entering a roadway. Motorcyclists need to position themselves on the road so that they can be better seen. Motorcycle riders need to be careful when splitting lanes and acknowledge that this maneuver makes many motorists uncomfortable or angry. The best rule of thumb for all motorcycle riders, don't ride above your head or beyond your capabilities. Everyone on the road needs to watch for anything or situation that could result in a collision.

Traffic Matters 06-24-01

Summer is here and that means that there are a lot of kids out of school running around on our roadways. Bicycles and skateboards on the street and sidewalks are a common sight. But recently, I have started to see a lot of electrical and gas powered scooters on our roads. The State of California has recently approved the use of these scooters, but there are requirements and restrictions that affect their riders. These laws were enacted for the safety of the scooter riders and other motorists that share the road.

Officer Mark Doyle of the Milpitas Police Department's Police Community Relations Division took some time to go over the new laws regarding the use of motor scooters. He compiled this information and printed a handout that is available to the public. These laws come from the California Vehicle Code (CVC) and most of the information in this article comes from that handout. First and foremost, the California Vehicle Code defines a motorized scooter as any two-wheeled device that has handlebars, is designed to be stood or sat upon by the operator, and is powered by an electric motor that is capable of propelling the device with or without human propulsion. A device meeting this definition that is powered by a source other than electrical power (e.g. a gasoline powered two-stroke engine) is also a motorized scooter (407.5 CVC).

Any person that wants to ride a motor scooter is not required to have a driver's license. However, they must be at least 16 years of age. Riders must also follow the rules of the road. Motor scooter riders between the age of 16 and 18 must wear a properly fitted and fastened protective bicycle helmet per 21235© CVC. The scooter must be equipped with a brake that will allow the operator to make a wheel skid on a dry, level and clean pavement per 21235(a) CVC. They must use lights and reflectors while riding at night per 21229 CVC. Riders must ride the scooter within marked bicycle lanes. Riding on the sidewalk is prohibited. If no bicycle lanes are available, they must ride along side of the right curb. If a rider needs to turn across traffic lanes, they must pull to the right side, dismount the scooter and walk the scooter across those lanes of traffic. Riders must also have a least one hand on the handlebars.

Motor scooter riders must be fully aware of the posted speed limit. No scooter may be driven at speeds greater than 15 miles per hour. If the speed limit is greater than 25 miles per hour, they must use the marked bicycle lane. No motor scooter may be driven on a roadway that has a speed limit of greater than 25 miles per hour and has no bike lanes. Residential roads with a speed limit to 25 miles per hour are ok. No passengers are allowed on a scooter. No person may operate a motor scooter under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

This covers most of the rules and regulations regarding the operation of motor scooters. Additional information is available at the Milpitas Police Department.

Traffic Matters 6-9-01

A couple of weeks ago we experienced some horrendous commuting conditions with two separate collisions on I-680 and I-880 north of our city. One tractor-trailer overturned and dumped chemicals onto the freeway. Another tractor-trailer went off the roadway and started a fire. Many commuters were subjected to hours of waiting due to all or most of the freeway being closed. To make matters even worse, the weather was still in the nineties. These conditions bring to mind the necessity of knowing how to drive through emergency scenes and being prepared for long delays. Whenever the police respond to an emergency, our first role is to secure the safety of the people involved. We determine the cause and nature of the injury, actual or potential, then dispatch fire and medics to treat those affected. We may have to close part or entire roadways so that emergency personnel can safely perform their jobs. We use emergency lights on our police vehicles, flares, cones and police officers to direct traffic safely around the hazard. It is very important that motorists follow the instructions of the officers at the scene and properly negotiate the flare or cone patterns. Unfortunately, we also see secondary collisions when people "rubber neck" or "gawk" at the emergency scene instead of paying attention to the roadway in front of them. Anyone who drives through a cone or flare pattern can be cited and fined. This reminds me of a traffic court trial I watched where a construction worker drove through a police traffic cone pattern. The violation took place in San Jose on Highway 87. As many commuters already know, there is heavy construction on Highway 87 between US 101 and I-280. The San Jose Police Department had to cone off and restrict traffic in the area due to President Clinton's motorcade using the highway to access the airport. The construction worker ignored police officer's directions and drove through the cone pattern not once, but two times so that he could get to the construction site. With the motorcade in sight, this situation could have made the United States Secret Service very uneasy. The traffic court commissioner listened to both sides and took the matter under submission. I don't know how she ruled on this matter. I would estimate that under normal circumstances, the construction worker could drive through cones set up in a construction zone. However, he would not be exempt from driving through a police cone or flare pattern. It is important to exercise caution and care when driving through an emergency scene. Pay careful attention when negotiating cone or flare patterns. On days where the weather is really hot, make sure there is some water in your car as you may not be able to exit the freeway for a long period of time. Listen to the radio for road condition reports and alternate routes to bypass these scenes so that you can reach your destination. Try and learn alternate routes to your home or work in case of road closures. Questions and comments are always welcomed.

Traffic Matters 5-13-01

I don't think I have to tell anyone who lives or travels the roads of Milpitas that the weather got very hot last week. We were just getting hammered with a lot of sunshine. I believe we had three days of temperatures in the nineties. Along with the heat came the tremendous use of energy to cool our homes and businesses. That use of power leaves the State of California

short of power during heavy demands. That in turn means rolling blackouts that turns off all power in particular service grids. The end result for motorists is that we face commuting on roadways that have no power for the traffic control signals.

PG&E gave us a warning of a rolling blackout on May 8th and advised us the service grid that would be affected. Our dispatchers translated that information and advised the police officers what intersections would be affected by the power outages. Imagine rolling up on the intersection of Calaveras Boulevard and Milpitas Boulevard at 5:30 PM and discover the power is off. It was at least 94 degrees outside. Our watch commander utilized every police officer available from all police divisions to respond and assist in directing traffic in the affected intersections.

When I first arrived at this intersection, I was surprised at my observations. People were obeying the vehicle code. This code requires a stop at a controlled intersection that has no power. The intersection becomes a four way stop in all directions. People were stopping and yielding to traffic stopped before them and to the right. Anyone entering the intersection was doing so very slowly and cautiously. With the assistance of another officer, we began to direct traffic to get commuters through the affected intersections safely. My thanks goes out to a great deal of people who exercised a lot of patience with this situation and paid attention to our directions. As usual, there were a couple people that missed our directions and ended up stopping in the middle of the intersection. Fortunately for all, there was only one fender bender during the blackout.

We are probably going to experience more of these blackouts as the temperatures rise through the summer and PG&E continues to have their problems. Despite these problems, the Milpitas Police Department is committed to the motoring community by initiating immediate action plans to effectively and safely direct traffic on our roadways.

Traffic Matters 4-7-01

Aaaaarrggggg! Doesn't driving around here just drive you nuts? No pun intended. My latest pet peeve is people who do not use their turn signals. I got a call from a reader pointing out this problem and all of a sudden, these violations starting sticking out like a sore thumb. Don't you some times feel like stopping one of these drivers and saying, "Hello, McFly!" "See that little lever sticking out the side of your steering wheel?" "It's called a turn signal activator." "Know it, use it, love it, please."

Fortunately for many drivers, my badge and uniform come with a great deal of training, experience and patience. I will politely explain the rule of the road that requires the use their turn signals when initiating a turn or lane change. Then I will probably issue a citation for the violation. The law requires that the motorist signal continuously for the last one hundred feet before turning. A signal is required whenever your turning movement is going to affect another driver. Proper position on the roadway is also required before making that turn.

The one thing that most of these violators don't know is that a lot of the remaining motorists on the road are defensive drivers. We will actually help you make that turn or lane changes if you just give us a little warning. It frustrates us to no end when a driver practically stops in the middle of the road in front of use and then makes a turn. People who use their turn signals properly relieve a great deal of potential tension and give everyone else the opportunity to extend a little courtesy.

Speaking of courtesy, I need to give a big thank you to two unidentified motorists sharing northbound I-280 near Bird Avenue with me a couple of days ago. Traffic was bumper to bumper because the CHP had three of the four lanes closed. I could see the wreckage of what appeared to be a major roll over collision. I used my signal and immediately, two people slowed and created room to allow me to make the lanes changes. I waved a thank you to two very courteous drivers. It's funny, just when you think that traffic conditions and bad drivers are never going to change, some anonymous person does an act of kindness that helps rebuild your faith in the motoring public. I will remember to signal when it's my turn.

Traffic Matters - March 23, 2001

The Milpitas Police Department Traffic Division pays special attention to problems areas on our public roads. We have seen an increase in collisions on Calaveras Boulevard between Hillview Drive and Abel Street. A big part of our job is figuring out why collisions occur. Every collision investigation has a primary collision factor. This is usually a rule of the road violation that resulted in a vehicle colliding into something. That collision resulted in property damage or injury to the involved parties. These primary collision factors generate reports that allow us to pinpoint a particular violation. Speeding has been the major problem on this stretch of roadway.

What is speeding anyway? The California Vehicle Code section 22350 defines this violation as the basic speed law. "No person shall drive a vehicle upon a highway at a speed greater than is reasonable or prudent having due regard for weather, visibility, the traffic on, and the surface and width of, the highway, and in no event at speed which endangers the safety of persons or property." Most police officers would define this as speed unsafe for the existing conditions. Even though the speed limit is posted at 40 MPH for most of this roadway, you can be driving at a slower speed and still violate this law.

How is this possible? The law requires you to follow a car at a distance that will allow you to slow or stop without running into the rear of the car you are following. If that car ahead of you stops and you hit them from behind, then you have been traveling at a speed that was unsafe for the existing conditions. Any speed greater than zero at the point of impact would be unsafe. I could also articulate that a speed of 5 MPH with 20 feet of distance between the stopped car and the following car would be safe. Why? At 5 MPH the car would be traveling at about seven feet per second. I would add one and one half seconds of perception and reaction time. That allows the following car to stop in about eleven feet and still allow about nine feet between the two cars.

People traveling on this stretch of roadway are going to see a lot of traffic officers. We will be focusing on the speeding problem. We could be citing people for a little as 5 MPH over the posted speed limit. And you can be sure that we will be writing citations for any and all other moving violations. This is an effort to reduce the number of collisions that result in damage and/or injury. Every one needs a reminder that we all need to be reasonable, prudent and have due regard for the safety of others.

Traffic Matters - March 11, 2001

I'm stopped in the number one lane of westbound Jacklin Road at North Milpitas Boulevard waiting for the red light. Just two lanes to the right of me, I start watching the people in the right turn pocket who are waiting to turn northbound on North Milpitas Boulevard. The very first person stops at the limit line. About five cars line up behind the first car and also stop. The first car in the turn pocket at the limit line sees a safe opening in traffic and makes the right turn. The next five cars behind him roll slowly up to the limit line. They check for traffic, while still rolling at about five miles per hour and make their right turns. This is a red light violation.

It's hard to believe that despite all our enforcement efforts concerning driver responsibility towards red lights, we still have not got the message across. Any traffic facing a red light must come to a complete stop at or before the limit line. If there is a crosswalk present, the first line of the crosswalk is the limit line. If you are following a car that has just stopped at the limit line for the red light and proceeded after stopping, you must also stop when you reach the limit line. If there is no limit line present, then you must stop at the curb line extension. Each car in line must stop in turn when they reach the limit line. You must also yield to traffic that is close enough to be a hazard before initiating the turning movement.

Here is the common sense reason to stop at the red light. You might collide with another car, bicyclist or pedestrian. This may cause damage to your vehicle or injury to another person or yourself. Let's say you are only traveling at only five miles per hour. That's about seven feet per second. It takes the average person one and a half seconds to perceive and react to a situation. Now you have traveled about ten feet. In essence, not only have you crossed the width of the crosswalk, you have probably driven past the curb line extension and into the new roadway. If any cross traffic has to brake to avoid you, then that is a right of way violation.

I could picture a collision investigation where the turning car runs a red light, violates the cross traffic's right of way and hits another car. That would result in one point and a minimum \$281 fine for the red light violation. It would be another point and a \$103 fine for the right of way violation. It would be an additional point for being at fault in the collision. Get the point?

Who ever said that you don't have to stop at a red light before you make a turn is just plain wrong. Just add up the points.

Traffic Matters February 10, 2001

In June of 2000, I wrote an article concerning a grant from the Office of Traffic Safety. This grant was received by the Milpitas Police Department to target specific traffic violations and their related problems. The intent of the grant was to reduce fatalities, injuries and economic losses resulting from motor vehicle collisions. We found that people that violate the vehicle code are responsible for making traffic matters hard on law-abiding people. Today's article is a follow up on our progress and to further explain the intent of the program.

The grant is titled the "Vehicle Impound Program." We added two additional motorcycle officers and modified our police department's approach to specific traffic problems. We

adopted a "No License, No Car, No Exception" policy. Anyone who drives on the roadways in the City of Milpitas knows first hand the congestion and frustration downloaded upon us due to the juxtaposition of our city in the South Bay. Our city is a focal point of some of the worst commuting areas in the State of California. Imagine your joy when not only does someone violate the rules of the road and hits your car, you discover they have no drivers license and had no business being behind the wheel of a car. Or worse yet, they have a suspended license and no insurance. Our grant program has been set up to separate these problem drivers from their vehicles.

Some people might argue that this grant has been designed for cities such as ours to generate money from the impound fees from towed cars. This would not be true. What we hope to achieve is that people will comply with the law without the taking of their cars and money. This grant program is the first necessary step towards reducing the amount of people who take to our roadways without the proper tools to negotiate from point A to point B without getting into a collision. The possession of a driver's license is an important part of this process. Although this program focuses on aggressive enforcement, we also hope to educate the public about their driving responsibilities. We are constantly evaluating the needs of and our response to the motoring community. We are specifically targeting speeders, red light runners, DUI drivers and people driving on a suspended, revoked or no license drivers.

If you get stopped for driving without or on a suspended driver's license, the vehicle code allows us to keep that car up to thirty days. That is a tremendous cost to the driver as they are responsible for the impound, storage and release fees. We also criminally prosecute people who drive on a suspended driver's license. This usually results in additional money penalties and perhaps some time spent in jail. In some cases, we can permanently seize the car in a forfeiture process. We are working hard to meet the goals of this grant program and we hope to make an impact on the traffic problems we all face every day.

Traffic Matters - January 29, 2001

Have you ever been driving down the road, minding your own business, when suddenly another driver appears right on top of your rear bumper and starts flashing its lights. Then the driver honks its horn and passes you to the right. And then to finish the scenario, the driver screams obscenities and displays sign language as he speeds away. This is just one example of road rage and is the topic in question from Julie in Milpitas.

Q. As small a community that Milpitas is, it suffers from the worst case of tailgater and road "ragers" I have ever seen. I have had people tailgate me so bad that I can't ever see their headlights. I see people honking and tailgating others I see accidents everyday resulting from these driving habits.

Tailgating: While using the exit off of Carlo Street onto Calaveras Boulevard. The drivers are bumper to bumper as they wait to merge. If one car attempts to merge, other cars behind it try to squeeze in behind it resulting in fender benders when the first car does not make it. I also see tailgating when cars try to make it through a red light, when cars are not moving fast enough, while driving through a school zone and while driving through residential areas.

Road Rage: I was pulling out of a bank exit a few months ago and my turn was a little too wide. While I was trying to back up to correct my position, the young girl pulling in started screaming obscenities. I had a child with me so I wasn't too happy with this situation.

I myself as losing patience with these drivers and would like some tips on how to deal with these sort of situations. What can I do if someone is tailgating me and I can't change lanes? If some one is screaming at you, is this against the law? If they are blocking you, is this a traffic violation? If you took down their license plate number, would this help?

A. Julie in Milpitas is just one of many people experiencing troubles while using our public roadways. If someone is tailgating you, wait until you can safely change lanes to get out of the way. Remember that faster drivers like to use the number one lane. If you can not keep pace, avoid using this lane. If some starts screaming at you for whatever reason, remember that they have just lost control of their emotions and almost any response from you may trigger a more violent act. If someone is blocking you, slow down and change lanes until you are far away from the offender. If you have a problem with a driver and you take down their license plate number, the Milpitas Police Department will follow up by contacting the driver and discuss safer driving habits with them. By keeping your head in these types of situations, you will always come out the winner.

Traffic Matters 1-8-01

They call it stormy Monday, but Tuesday just as bad." These words come from a famous blues song by T-Bone Walker. For the sake of the commuting public, I hope that Tuesday is going to be better than today. My Monday morning started with a crash. Before I could even grab a cup of coffee, I had to respond to an injury collision on East Calaveras Boulevard and North Milpitas Boulevard. A Dodge pickup truck had impaled itself into a traffic signal light pole. There was so much damage to the truck that the Milpitas Fire Department had to use the "Jaws of Life" to cut the roof off of the truck to extract the driver. This rainy Monday morning was not a lucky day for the driver due to the fact he compounded the situation by failing to use his seat belt. As the truck came to a sudden halt when it hit the signal pole, the driver's body continued to move forward until it struck the truck's windshield, steering wheel and front console area. The driver was fortunate to receive only minor to moderate injuries.

To make matters even worse for all involved, at least five people ran the red light as they were "rubber necking" the accident scene. There was also one minor rear end collision. There were police cars, fire trucks, flares, cones, and police officers present to help motorists through the intersection. Despite our efforts I am sure it was a difficult commute for everyone traveling westbound on Calaveras Boulevard. It does not help anyone to slow and gawk at the scene of the collision. This behavior will lead to additional collisions. Imagine your embarrassment if you were to collide with another car because you were watching the crash scene instead of the traffic conditions ahead of you.

The driver of the truck did not have a good start to his workweek. His stormy Monday resulted in a trip to the hospital and it will probably take some time to heal from his injuries. The collision may have not been his fault and it is still under investigation. The truck is totaled and is destined to the junkyard. The one big thing comes to mind after all is said and done, using your seatbelt properly will save your body and your life. It is always worthwhile to buckle up.